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American Veteran

I took the time to sit down with my Uncle Shawn and gained a new perspective on how he feels as a veteran who served in the U.S. Army. My Uncle, Shawn Appleget, served in the U.S. Army and served two tours in Central Iraq. He explained to me that he was very happy to serve in the military due to the events that had occurred on September 11, 2001. My uncle said it was due to these events that he decided to step up and join the U.S. Army. He explained to me that during the time after 9-11, as it is referred to, the community embraced any member of any of the branches of the military, police departments, fire departments and all other first responders. These groups were all looked at as “heroes.”

My uncle said that when he was first deployed to go into Iraq, he felt very scared and anxious about going into war. He said he was going into a place he knew nothing about other than that there was a lot of fighting going on. While in Iraq he became very numb to all of the bloodshed and fighting and kept very busy doing what he had to do to stay alive. After his tours he would return back home to the U.S. and life was a new normal for him.

My uncle stated that when people would find out that he had served in the Army and served two tours there was much appreciation for what he had done for our country. To this day, as people learn of his sacrifice for our country he is thanked, hugged and looked at with deep respect.

I asked my uncle how the current issue of professional athletes taking a knee during the National Anthem makes him feel. He stated that our National Anthem should always be respected by everyone but it especially affects those who have served in any of the branches of the military. Our National Anthem stands for the pride that the Veterans feel for what they have done for our country. My uncle believes that people (including athletes) have the right to have a voice when it comes to issues going on in the world today. As we all know, athletes are looked up to by kids, teens and adults and can make a powerful voice. For my uncle as a veteran and other veterans that he knows, the feeling is that even though they are protesting peacefully and non-violently they could find a better time to protest other than when the National Anthem is played. To some, this is very disrespectful to not stand and salute what has been fought for. There are plenty of other areas that these athletes can be heard and seen by the public.

While speaking with my uncle, he said "Since post 9-11 the community treats us as veterans with much gratitude, respect and appreciation." I feel that I am very honored to have someone in my family that served in the U.S. Army to protect us. Our family was very fortunate that my uncle came back from his two deployments unharmed. Many families were not so lucky. I would suggest that if you don't have a family member who is serving or has served for our country to find a veteran and sit down with them for a while. There is so much to learn from what they did and have seen. Our veterans hold the keys to the history of our country and for that, they will always have **MY** respect, honor and gratitude!